

Viet Nam Quagmire Goes Back to the White House

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Two British comments on the mess in Viet Nam reveal a strong belief that the United States Central Intelligence Agency's activities in that far-off Southeast Asian battle area result from ineffective control of the CIA and that the only man who actually can straighten out the American position in Viet Nam is the president himself:

"Sooner or later, Mr. Kennedy will have to find some way of dealing with President Diem of South Viet Nam," writes the Scotsman editorialist. "It is at least a good sign that he has recalled the head of the Central Intelligence Agency in South Viet Nam; it means re-establishing presidential control over what Americans there actually do. It is unreasonable that America should pour out vast sums of money on a regime which behaves badly enough to arouse international attention and, at the same time, vehemently criticizes America. This kind of thing cannot in reason go on forever. The whole dreadful farce continues because it is argued in Washington that just another year or so will see the final military defeat of the Viet Cong Communists. But that purposed military optimism seems open to question just as much as the political pessimism which finds no middle way between Diem and communism."

The London Times comments that lack of proper control over the CIA is a factor in the South Viet Nam situation but adds:

"It is important that the Central Intelligence Agency should not become a scapegoat for what are often sins of the government. Its involvement with President Diem's family in Viet Nam was encouraged by the absence of clear directions from Washington. The American government was split over the proper policy for Viet Nam, and in the resulting cleavage the State Department went one way and some of the Central Intelligence Agency another. The difficulty that has always dogged the agency is that it is basically inimical to American traditions, and the country has been unable to assimilate it. The recent troubles have already revived demand for more congressional control, and some increase may be possible; in the end, however, only one person is in a position to exert full control, and that is the President himself."

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